

UTILITY  
PATENT APPLICATION  
TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No.

P00,0173

First Named Inventor or Application Identifier

Wolfgang Thiel

Express Mail Label No: # EL408260081US

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Box Patent Application  
Washington, DC 20231

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. ☒ Specification [Total Pages 20 ]  
2. ☒ Drawing(s) (35USC 113) [Total Pages 2 ]  
3. ☒ Declaration and Power of Attorney [Total Pages 2 ]

a. ☒ Newly executed declaration (Faxed copy of original)

b. ☐ Copy from prior application (37CFR 1.63(d))  
(for continuation/divisional with Box 14 completed)

[Note Box 4 Below]

- i. ☐ **DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)**  
Signed statement attached deleting  
Inventor(s) named in the prior application,  
see 37 CFR 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).

4. ☐ Incorporation By Reference (usable if Box 3b is checked)  
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a  
copy of the oath or declaration is supplied under Box 3b,  
is considered as being part of the disclosure of the  
accompanying application and is hereby incorporated by  
reference therein.

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

5. ☒ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & documentation)  
Francotyp-Postalia AG & Co.  
(Faxed copy of original)  
6. ☐ Letter under 37 CFR 1.41(c).  
7. ☐ English Translation Document (if applicable)  
8. ☐ Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 ☐ Copies of IDS Citations  
9. ☐ Preliminary Amendment  
10. ☒ Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503)  
(Should be specifically itemized)  
11. ☐ Small Entity Statement filed in prior application, Status still proper and desired  
12. ☒ Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) German  
Application No. 199 13 066.3 filed March 17, 1999  
13. ☐ Other:

14. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:

☐ Continuation ☐ Divisional ☐ Continuation-in-part (CIP) ☐ of prior application No: /

CLAIMS AS FILED

(1) FOR	(2) NUMBER FILED	(3) NUMBER EXTRA	(4) RATE	(5) BASIC FEE \$690.00
TOTAL CLAIMS 20	9			
INDEPENDENT CLAIMS 3	2			
ANY MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIMS? (YES (X) NO)				
			TOTAL FILING FEE ->	\$690.00

☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required in connection with this application, or credit any overpayment to ACCOUNT NO. 08-2290. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

☒ A check in the amount of \$ 690.00 to cover the filing fee is enclosed.

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491/899:1190  
U-11

Steven H. Noll #25,982

DATE: March 16, 2000

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100	2101	2102	2103	2104	2105	2106	2107	2108	2109	2110	2111	2112	2113	2114	2115	2116	2117	2118	2119	2120	2121	2122	2123	2124	2125	2126	2127	2128	2129	2130	2131	2132	2133	2134	2135	2136	2137	2138	2139	2140	2141	2142	2143	2144	2145	2146	2147	2148	2149	2150	2151	2152	2153	2154	2155	2156	2157	2158	2159	2160	2161	2162	2163	2164	2165	2166	2167	2168	2169	2170	2171	2172	2173	2174	2175	2176	2177	2178	2179	2180	2181	2182	2183	2184	2185	2186	2187	2188	2189	2190	2191	2192	2193	2194	2195	2196	2197	2198	2199	2200	2201	2202	2203	2204	2205	2206	2207	2208	2209	2210	2211	2212	2213	2214	2215	2216	2217	2218	2219	2220	2221	2222	2223	2224	2225	2226	2227	2228	2229	2230	2231	2232	2233	2234	2235	2236	2237	2238	2239	2240	2241	2242	2243	2244	2245	2246	2247	2248	2249	2250	2251	2252	2253	2254	2255	2256	2257	2258	2259	2260	2261	2262	2263	2264	2265	2266	2267	2268	2269	2270	2271	2272	2273	2274	2275	2276	2277	2278	2279	2280	2281	2282	2283	2284	2285	2286	2287	2288	2289	2290	2291	2292	2293	2294	2295	2296	2297	2298	2299	2300	2301	2302	2303	2304	2305	2306	2307	2308	2309	2310	2311	2312	2313	2314	2315	2316	2317	2318	2319	2320	2321	2322	2323	2324	2325	2326	2327	2328	2329	2330	2331	2332	2333	2334	2335	2336	2337	2338	2339	2340	2341	2342	2343	2344	2345	2346	2347	2348	2349	2350	2351	2352	2353	2354	2355	2356	2357	2358	2359	2360	2361	2362	2363	2364	2365	2366	2367	2368	2369	2370	2371	2372	2373	2374	2375	2376	2377	2378	2379	2380	2381	2382	2383	2384	2385	2386	2387	2388	2389	2390	2391	2392	2393	2394	2395	2396	2397	2398	2399	2400	2401	2402	2403	2404	2405	2406	2407	2408	2409	2410	2411	2412	2413	2414	2415	2416	2417	2418	2419	2420	2421	2422	2
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Date of Deposit: March 16, 2000

U.S. Patent Application for Wolfgang Thiel Entitled “METHOD AND ARRANGEMENT FOR ENTERING CONTENTS OF A FRANKING IMPRINT INTO A POSTAGE METER MACHINE”, two sheets of drawings, executed Declaration, Certified Copy of German 199 13 066.3, Assignment Recordation Form, executed Assignment, appropriate government filing and recording fees. (Attorney’s Docket No. P-00,0173).

Signature of \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person Mailing Application and Fees

# **SPECIFICATION**

## **TITLE**

**“METHOD AND ARRANGEMENT FOR ENTERING CONTENTS OF A FRANKING IMPRINT INTO A POSTAGE METER MACHINE”**

## **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

### **Field of the Invention**

The present invention is directed to a method and to an arrangement for entering the contents of the franking imprint into a postage meter machine of the type equipped with a chip card read unit and an appertaining control unit in order to simplify the country-specific or carrier-specific configuration of the postage meter machine.

### **Description of the Prior Art**

Modern postage meter machines such as, for example, the thermal transfer postage meter machine disclosed in United States Patent No. 4,746,234 utilize electronic digital printer devices. It is thus fundamentally possible to generate arbitrary franking imprints. These usually contain a customer-specific advertising slogan imprint, a machine-specific and location-specific municipal postmark and a mail carrier-specific value imprint. It is known to produce customized logos for a customer-specific advertising slogan imprint in an EPROM for installation into the postage meter machine, for example of the type T1000, manufactured by Francotyp-Postalia AG & Co. This T1000 is built in various country versions that differ from one another in terms of hardware due to the extremely different approval regulations of the various national postal authorities. It is required in country-specific fashion for postage meter machines to permanently install the franking imprint with the postal symbol (value stamp) or, respectively electronically store the form of the imprint in postage meter machines having electronic printers. In the manufacture of the T1000, the postage meter

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machines, for example, are initialized country-specifically or machine-specifically before they are assembled, for example with a further EPROM insertion.

It is been disclosed (in European Application 88 429, and 99 110) to store the machine-specific machine serial number in a non-volatile memory (EEPROM). Such a setting in known systems is likewise implemented during the manufacture. A reentry into such a configuration program is thereby prevented by an inhibit bit.

The program disclosed in European Application 111 316 is stored in the program memory of the postage meter machine and contains firmware branch points. The data bits stored in an external memory (NVM) allow the program to be permanently reconfigured on the basis of a conditional branch. A version disclosed in European Application 111 317 contains a firmware variable program stored in the program memory of the postage meter machine. The data bits stored in an external memory (NVM) allow the program to be reconfigured. After this EEPROM handling, a sealing of the postage meter machine usually follows, so that replacement of the EEPROM is not a simple task.

As an alternative solution, United States Patent No. 4,424,573 discloses programming the serial number of the postal device by a data center. In European Application 131 967, a configuring of the postage meter machine ensues via a keyboard externally connectable to the postage meter machine. The configuration event is only possible once. The outlay required in the configuring is disadvantageous.

When the postage meter machine contains a postage computer, then weight information are entered by a scale, and the postage meter machine calculates the postage value for the value imprint. For such a system, European Application 566 225



installation of a modem would then also require expensive hardware and software modifications. For some geographical areas, for example for countries of the European Union, the different currencies will be eliminated in future and be replaced by the Euro. Postage meter machines such as the T1000-EURO® JetMail® of Francotyp-Postalia AG & Co. can be used in the transition phase as well as after the conversion to the Euro. No monetary values in the postage meter machine are lost. A part of the value imprint could therefore be designed uniformly in future, and only differences in the graphic design remaining due to the different mail carrier companies. Universal franking devices that are also suitable for private carriers (UPS, Federal Express, etc.) are of interest in the future.

#### **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

An object of the present invention is to provide an arrangement for setting the contents of the franking imprint for postage meter machines that avoids the disadvantages of the prior art and can be realized in economic fashion. A further object is to provide find a method for making carrier-specific and/or country-specific postal imprints available that is suitable for various distribution areas independently of the manufacturing logistics.

The object is inventively achieved in a method and apparatus wherein permanently programmed postage stamp data are made available in a non-interchangeable memory of a postage meter machine that has additional memory areas in order to load further, specifying data, so that the combination thereof with the stored postage imprint data allows a carrier-specific and country-specific franking imprint to be formed. This is especially advantageous when the postage meter machine is to be

configured to a national, governmental mail service. When the postage meter machine is to be configured for a private, internationally operating postal company, at least one loading of the specific postal stamp data of this postal company ensues. It is possible that the arrangement and form of the graphic design is the same for some countries. Of course, the postal stamp can exhibit country-specific differences that are typical for the dispatching country such as, for example, the national language or the currency. However, it can be meaningful for countries having the same currency, for example the Euro in Europe, and same graphic design, to select an internationally recognized language, for example English. In such a case, it is possible that the same postal stamp of the mail carrier is valid for several countries. Inventively, the further, specific data are different carrier-specific data and/or the local data for the location at which the postage meter machine is to be utilized. The further, specifying data are loaded at the end, this loading ensuing remote from the place of use.

The further, specifying data that are required for a complete franking imprint can be loaded at the end of the manufacturing process by the manufacturer, or at least remote from the subsequent place of use by interface, in order to produce a carrier-specific machine from a country-specific machine, or vice versa, in the manufacturing process or at a location authorized for this purpose or at the dealer, i.e. at the very end, this being set in conformity with the requirements of specific mail carriers. The interface, for example, is a chip card reader unit, preferably an inexpensive version for which at least one specific chip card is offered and that is inserted into the reader unit before delivery of the postage meter machine to the place of use.

For operating an electronic, digitally driveable printer, alternatively, a set of permanently programmed, non-erasable, carrier-specific and/or country-specific franking imprint data are offered in a non-replaceable memory of the postage meter machine, with sub-sections of the set producing the complete imprint, in combination. The sub-sections are image data files of a control data file that a microprocessor of the postage meter machine processes together with picture element data files in order to produce at least one value stamp image. Further sub-image data files can be allocated to the image data files, for example for the postage value, etc. The data files are provided and stored by the manufacturer of the postage meter machine in a first step. More data files are made available than would be required for a franking imprint. The serial number is entered in a step separate therefrom. Moreover, the installation of an interface, for example of a chip card reader unit, ensues in all types of postage meter machines. The franking imprint can then be selected with a specific chip card.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

Figure 1 perspective view of a postage meter machine constructed and operating in accordance with the invention from behind.

Figure 2 block circuit diagram for setting the function of the postage meter machine of Figure 1 and for driving the printer device thereof.

Figure 3 shows franking imprint produced in accordance with the invention.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS**

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of the inventive postage meter machine from the back. The postage meter machine is composed of a meter 1 and a base 2. The latter is equipped with a chip card reader unit 70 (see Figure 2) that is arranged behind



the guide plate 20 and is accessible from the upper edge 22 of the housing. After the postage meter machine is switched on with the switch 71, a chip card 49 is inserted into the insertion slot 72 from top to bottom. (More than one chip card may be used; the chip card 49 represents all such chip cards.) A letter 3 supplied standing on edge and that has a surface to be printed lying against the guide plate 20 is then printed with a franking imprint in conformity with the input data, whereby this franking imprint includes a value imprint 31. The letter delivery opening is laterally limited by a transparent plate 21 and by the guide plate 20.

Figure 2 shows a block circuit diagram of a postage meter machine that is equipped with a chip card reader unit 70 for reloading change data by chip card and with a printer with a printhead 4 that is controlled by a control unit 23. The control unit 23 has a motherboard 9 equipped with a microprocessor 91 with appertaining memories 92, 93, 94, 95.

The program memory 92 contains an operating program at least for printing and contains at least security-relevant component parts of the program for a pre-determined format change of a part of the operating data.

The main memory RAM 93 serves for volatile intermediate storage of intermediate results. The non-volatile memory NVM 94 serves the purpose of non-volatile intermediate storage of data, for example at least the postage meter machine serial number, carrier-specific and/or country-specific configuration data and, if necessary, other configuration data as well as value imprint image data. The calendar/clock module 95 likewise contains addressable but non-volatile memory areas for non-volatile intermediate storage of intermediate results or of known program parts

as well (for example, for the DES algorithm). It is provided that the control unit 23 is connected to the chip card reader unit 70, whereby the microprocessor 91 of the control unit 23 being programed, for example, to load the operating data N from the memory area of a chip card 49 into corresponding memory areas of the control unit 23 for use of said operating data. A first chip card 49 inserted into an insertion slot 72 of the chip card reader unit 70 allows a reloading of a data set into the postage meter machine 1 for a configuration. The chip card 49, for example, contains a mail carrier identifier in order to generate a stamp image with the postage meter machine and to frank the postal matter in conformity with the desired mail carrier.

The chip card reader unit 70 is composed of a mechanical carrier for the microprocessor card and a contacting unit 74. The latter allows a secure mechanical holding of the chip card 49 in a read position and an unambiguous signaling of when the read position of the chip card is reached in the contacting unit 74. The microprocessor card with the microprocessor 75 has a programmed read capability for only specific types of storage cards or chip cards. The interface to the control unit 23 is a serial interface according to RS 232 standard. The data transmission rate is a minimum of 1.2 K Baud. Turning the power supply on ensues with a switch 71 connected to the motherboard 9. After the power supply is turned on, a self-test function with a readiness message ensues. The demands made of the processor performance are so low that the chip card reader unit 70 can be a type having a reduced processor performance, thereby reducing cost. The scope of the data to be stored in a configuration chip card 49 is especially small when only a selection from a number of data sets need be undertaken therewith, these data sets being pre-stored

in a non-volatile memory of the postage meter machine 1. The number of data sets is defined by the differences in the relevant currencies, languages, mail carriers and countries.

The control unit 23 forms the actual meter 1 with the components 91 through 95 of the aforementioned motherboard 9. The meter 1 also has a keyboard 88, a display unit 89 as well as an application-specific circuit (ASIC) 90, and an interface 8 for the postal security module (PSM) 100. The security module (PSM) 100 is connected via a control bus to the aforementioned ASIC 90 and to the microprocessor 91 and is also connected via the parallel  $\mu$ C bus at least to the components 91 through 95 of the motherboard 9 and to the display unit 89. The control bus carries lines for the signals CE, RD and WR between the security module 100 and the aforementioned ASIC 90. The microprocessor 91 preferably has a pin for an interrupt signal i emitted by the security module 100, further terminals for the keyboard 88, a serial interface SI-1 for the connection of the chip card reader unit 70 and a serial interface SI-2 for the optional connection of a modem. With the modem, for example, the credit stored in the non-volatile memory of the postal security module 100 can be incremented.

The postal security module 100 is surrounded by a secured housing and has a back-up battery 134. An accounting in terms of hardware is implemented in the postal security module 100 before every franking imprint. The accounting ensues independently of cost centers. The postal security module 100 can be implemented internally as was disclosed in greater detail in European Application 789 333.

The ASIC 90 has a serial interface circuit 98 to a preceding device 98a in the mail stream, a serial interface circuit 96 to sensors and actuators of the printer, a serial

interface circuit 97 to print control electronics 16 for the print head 4 and a serial interface circuit 99 to a device 99a following the printer in the mail stream. German OS 197 11 997 discloses a modified embodiment for the peripheral interface that is suitable for a number of peripheral devices (stations).

The interface circuit 96 coupled to the interface circuit 14 located in the machine base 2 sets up at least one connection to sensors and to actuators, for example an actuator for the drive motor 15 and an actuator for a cleaning and sealing station 40 for the ink jet print head 4, as well as an actuator for a tape dispenser 50 in the machine base 2. The basic arrangement and the interaction between ink jet print head 4 and the cleaning and sealing station 40 are described in German PS 197 26 642.

One of the aforementioned sensors arranged in the guide plate 20 is a sensor 17 which serves the purpose of preparing the print triggering given letter transport. The sensor 7 recognizes leading edge of the letter 3 for print triggering given letter transport. The conveyor is composed of a conveyor belt 10 and two drums 11, 11'. One of the drums is the drive drum 11, driven by the motor 15; the other is the entrained tensioning drum 11'. Preferably, the drive drum 11 is a toothed drum and the conveyor belt 10 is a toothed belt, which assures positive force transmission. Preferably, the drive drum 11 together with an incremental generator 5 is firmly seated on a shaft. The incremental generator 5, for example, is as a slotted disk that interacts with a light barrier 6 and outputs an encoder signal to the motherboard 9 via the line 19.

The individual print elements of the print head 4 are connected within its housing to the print head electronics 16, so the print head 4 can be driven for a purely electronic printing. The print control ensues on the basis of the path control of the letters, with the

selected imprint offset being taken into consideration, this being entered via the keyboard 88 or as needed by the chip card 49 and being stored in non-volatile fashion in the memory NVM 94. An intended imprint thus derives the imprint offset (without printing), the franking imprint image and, if present, further print images for advertising slogan, shipping information (selective imprints) and additional messages that can be edited. The non-volatile memory NVM 94 has a plurality of memory areas. These include a memory area wherein postage meter machine serial number is stored in non-volatile fashion.

The manufacturing process of the postage meter machine is divided into a number of steps, with one of the last steps being the country-specific and/or carrier-specific editing of the franking imprint and assignment of the machine serial number. The "manufacturing process" means all fabrication and configuration steps that lead to a functional franking device. The configuration of the country-specific and/or carrier-specific data alternatively can ensue outside the manufacturing plant in a subsidiary or at a dealer authorized to do this by the manufacturer, remote from the use location. The advantage of the inventive method is that all franking devices are physically produced in an identical way, and splitting is only necessary at the end of the manufacturing process. The last steps needed for this purpose can be separated in time and space from the physical manufacturing steps. It can be left to the foreign subsidiaries and commercial representatives as to how they shall organize this country-specific and/or carrier-specific configuration. The respective logistics differ for different distribution areas. For example, the method is suitable for parts of the European market where the graphic design of the postage stamp, the script (for example, Roman)

and, possibly, the currency unit (for example, Euro) are largely uniform. The existing interface is used for a specific card 49 in order to enter data into the postage meter machine 1 to carry out the final configuration thereof, by storing at least an identifier for the appertaining country in the respective language and the carrier logo in defined fashion. Even though the versatility of combinations is large, only the permitted (usable) combinations are, of course, of interest.

Figure 3 shows a franking stamp imprint in a form it takes in Germany after the currency conversion to Euro. Printing begins from right to left with the value imprint 31, the postmark 32 and, if desired, an advertising slogan 33. The advertising slogan 33 can be freely determined or selected by the customer. The logo of Deutsche Post AG is a post horn in the upper right corner of a rectangular value imprint frame. The designation EURO CENT for the currency unit resides over the window with the value 0000. An identifier (company and machine number) is printed therebelow.

Country versions with uniform script and currency exist in Europe which differ from one another only according to the language and the selected carrier. When a cover agency of the national European postal services assumes responsibility in future for the mail carrying, the differentiation according to national mail carriers can also be eliminated.

A bilingual format can be documented in the franking imprint with respect to the language such as, for example, in Belgium or South Africa. The graphic design of the postage stamp frame and of the postmark frame deviates from the appearance that is standard in most countries, for example in South Africa and Holland.

Other parts of the European market must be more highly specified; for example, a specific country version already exists with the Greek alphabet and language as well as with a specific carrier logo, for which reason the Greek alphabet is also subsequently loaded with the chip card.

In general, the script and the currency are country-specific. Thus, a specific country version with the Cyrillic alphabet, the currency of Rubles, but no specific carrier logo is used for Belorussia, since there is no carrier selection in some countries, i.e. logo, script and currency are rigidly prescribed.

The USA represents an antithetical example, numerous private mail carriers (couriers) operate therein in addition to the governmental postal authorities USPS.

It is assumed for the practical embodiment of the method that data taking the common characteristics in the distribution area into consideration are installed in the first step and data taking the differences in the distribution area into consideration are installed in the second step. Two versions thereby proceed as follows.

First, in a first configuration step, carrier-specific and/or country-specific data that correspond to a uniform basic franking image are non-volatilely stored in the memory 94 of the postage meter machine 1. The postage meter machine serial number is entered in a step separate therefrom. The franking image format data for the selection are arranged in a data bank of the manufacturer organized at least according to mail carriers and/or countries and can be allocated to a serial number. A postage meter machine 1 is considered pre-configured after a first step when defined data in the aforementioned data bank are allocated to a postage meter machine serial number. As needed, this postage meter machine 1 can be finally configured in a second step.

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In the first version, the print image data are transferred from a chip card into the graphics memory of the postage meter machine 1 in order to enable at least the generation of the carrier-specific and/or country-specific logos (for example, postal symbols). After the loading and storing of the data, the chip card 49 is removed from the chip card reader unit 70. The configuration with the same chip card 49 can only be accomplished during the initial insertion. An inhibit bit is automatically set in a memory cell of the non-volatile memory 94 after the removal of the chip card 49 in order to prevent an unauthorized, repeat configuration. Every further insertion of a different chip card in the future can modify such a configuration, with an appropriate authorization procedure being executed by the further chip card. This is particularly advantageous given leased postage meter machines. When such a machine is returned to the dealer in the same distribution area at the end of its lease, a re-configuration can ensue at the dealer with a suitable chip card 49. The print image data transferred from a chip card 49 into the graphics memory of the postage meter machine are, for example, related to a specific carrier and to a specific country. Given some private mail carriers, the stored, carrier-specific data are country-independent, pure graphic data (logos), and the country-specific data (language) are pure word data or refer to the national currency.

In one form of the first version communicated country-specific data are combined with the carrier-specific data stored in the preceding step, or vice versa. When the distribution area is limited to one country (for example, India), all country-specific data are stored in the first step and the loading of the carrier-specific data ensues after the selection of the desired carrier. In the distribution area of North America (i.e., USA and Canada), it is possible also to proceed oppositely in that the machines are first set to



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a carrier and are only set to the desired country as a final step. The term "country" as used herein means the territory under the authority of a single overriding governmental sovereign. The prior production of machines pre-configured to a carrier in advance is particularly meaningful for the postage meter machine manufacturer when the carrier has a relatively large market share.

In a another form of the first version uses more than two configuration steps, preferably with a number of chip cards, are executed. Each chip card carries an identifier regarding the combination that can be undertaken with it, for example for a distribution area within the European union. The currency can then already be determined in the first configuration step. In a second configuration step, the remaining specification data such as, for example, the logo of the national mail carrier, can then be loaded from a further chip card in a second configuration step. In a third configuration step, the city or the future receiving office can then be loaded. These three steps can be carried out at different locations. Thus, the definition of the distribution area and of the country can be carried out by the manufacturer. The postage meter machine pre-configured in this way is shipped to the national subsidiary of the defined country. A stipulation of the receiving office desired by the dealer or wholesaler is implemented at the defined country with the third configuration step. This graduated method has the advantage that final customer particulars need not be present for the pre-fabrication, or no customer order must be present, but the machines can be produced for warehousing, (inventory) thereby lowering the logistical manufacturing costs. Another advantage is that all possible data sets need not be stored at one location. Alternatively to the chip card, some other interface, for example

V 24, can be used in order to transmit data sets that are stored in a workstation or in a PC.

In the second version, the chip card 49 is inserted only in order to undertake a selection among the postal symbols that are stored in the postage meter machine and can be displayed via the display 89. The franking imprint image data have already been stored for selection in the non-volatile memory of the postage meter machine 1 in a preceding step, organized according to carrier and/or country. The print image data have an identification number allocated thereto, for example CIN (carrier identification number), SIN (state identification number), etc., so that only the respective identification numbers need to be loaded with the chip card 49 into a particular memory area of the non-volatile memory 94 of the postage meter machine 1 in order to produce a defined allocation for generating the desired franking imprint format. In one form, the non-selected, stored postal symbols are subsequently automatically erased by the postage meter machine controller or upon removal of the chip card 49 from the chip card reader unit 70.

Although modifications and changes may be suggested by those skilled in the art, it is the intention of the inventor to embody within the patent warranted hereon all changes and modifications as reasonably and properly come within the scope of his contribution to the art.

**I CLAIM AS MY INVENTION:**

1. A method for entering contents of a franking imprint into a postage meter machine, said postage meter machine having an electronic, digitally operating printer and said contents being employed for printing said franking imprint with said printer, said method comprising the steps of:

storing a set of data in a non-volatile memory of said postage meter machine by programming said additional data at said manufacturing location, said data being selected from the group consisting of different country-specific data and different carrier-specific data;

installing a data communication interface in said postage meter machine; and configuring said franking imprint of said postage meter machine dependent on at least one of a selected carrier and a selected country, by communicating with said postage meter machine via said interface, to select at least one of said permanently programmed carrier-specific data and country-specific data.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising installing a chip card reader as said interface, and configuring said postage meter machine using a chip card insertable into said chip card reader before delivery of said postage meter machine to said use location.

3. A method as claimed in claim 2 comprising storing said additional data in said non-interchangeable memory of said postage meter machine in a non-erasable manner at said manufacturing location, and subsequently selecting from a plurality of different carrier-specific data, in said additional data, by communicating via said

interface with a country-specific chip card inserted into said chip card reader, and setting an inhibit bit in said non-interchangeable memory after removing said chip card to prevent any further configuration of said postage meter machine.

4. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein said additional data includes carrier-specific data and country-specific data, and wherein both a carrier-specific selection and country-specific selection are made using said chip card.

5. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said interface comprises a chip card reader and comprising configuring said postage meter machine at said manufacturing location for a selected country wherein said postage meter machine is to be used by inserting a country-specific chip card into said chip card reader and combining country-specific data on said chip card with said permanently stored carrier-specific data.

6. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said interface comprises a chip card reader and comprising configuring said postage meter machine at said manufacturing location for a selected country wherein said postage meter machine is to be used by inserting a carrier-specific chip card into said chip card reader and combining carrier-specific data on said chip card with said permanently stored country-specific data.

7. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said interface comprises a chip card reader, and including the additional step of transferring print image data for said franking imprint from a chip card inserted in said chip card reader into a graphic memory of said postage meter machine for generating at least a carrier specific franking

imprint, and after removal of said chip card setting an inhibit bit in said graphics memory to prevent any further configuration of said postage meter machine.

8. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said interface comprises a chip card reader and comprising configuring said postage meter machine at said manufacturing location for a selected country wherein said postage meter machine is to be used by inserting a country-specific chip card into said chip card reader and combining country-specific data on said chip card with said permanently stored country-specific data.

9. An arrangement for entering contents of a franking imprint into a postage meter machine comprising:

a chip card reader;

a microprocessor connected to said chip card reader;

a non-volatile memory connected to said microprocessor, said non-volatile memory containing memory areas for storing data for producing said franking imprint; and

said microprocessor receiving data from said chip card reader for a franking imprint from a chip card inserted in said chip card reader and loading said data into said memory areas to configure said franking imprint.

## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

In an arrangement and method for entering postage the contents of a franking image into a postage meter machine, the franking image is initially incompletely pre-installed. The franking imprint data for a selection are ordered at least according to mail carrier and/or countries in a data bank of the manufacturer and can be allocated to the serial number of the machine. The postage meter machine serial number is entered in a step separate therefrom. As needed, data can be loaded or selected with a specific, country-specific and/or carrier-specific chip card in order to finally configure the postage meter machine.

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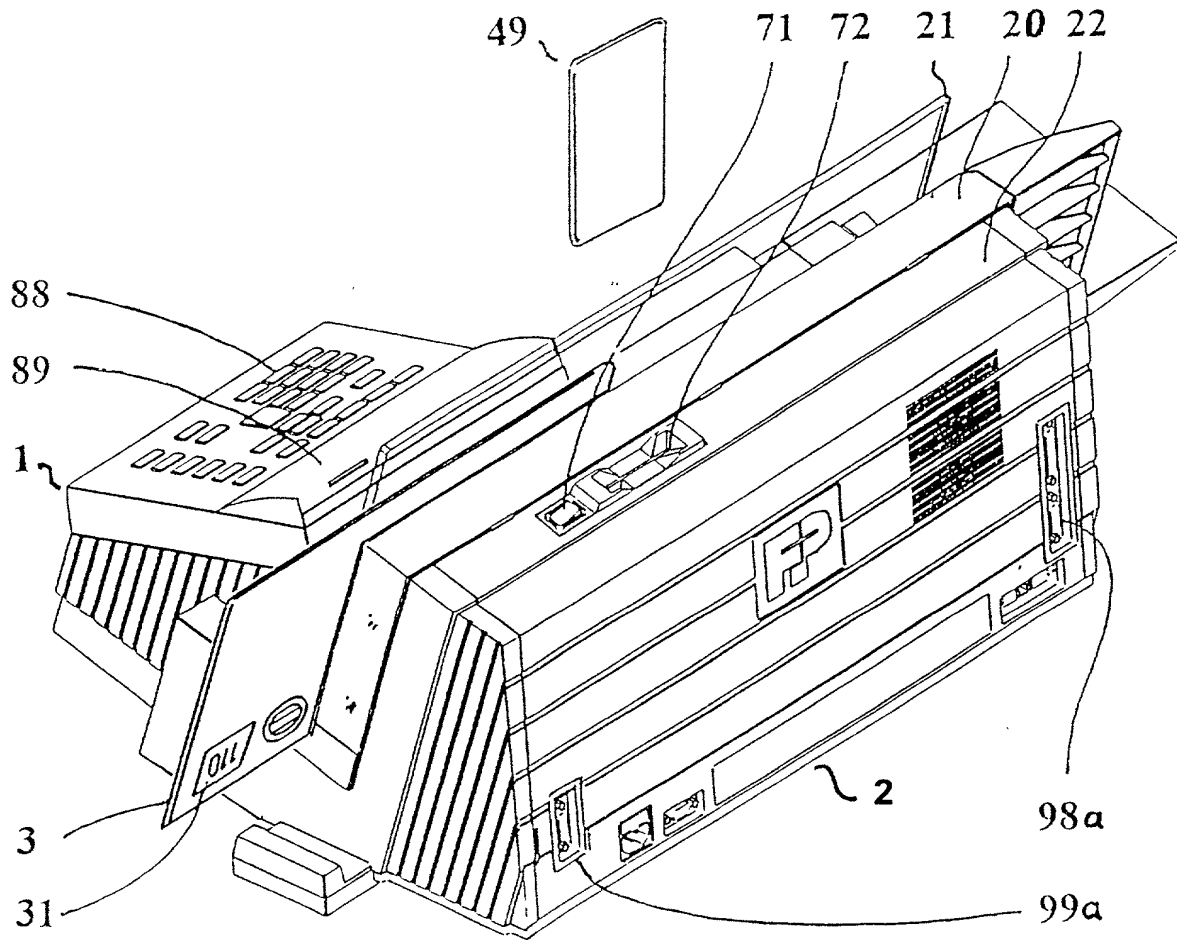


Fig. 1

Ist Ihre Frankiermaschine  
auch € tauglich?  
Wir informieren Sie kostenlos!

**FP** Francotyp-Postalia  
Tel. 0180 - 5 23 23 50

**BIRKENWERDER**  
17.3.99  
16542

**DEUTSCHE POST**  
EURO CENT  
0000  
F 080998

Fig. 3

## DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

### "METHOD AND ARRANGEMENT FOR ENTERING CONTENTS OF A FRANKING IMPRINT INTO A POSTAGE METER MACHINE"

Case No. P00,0173, the specification of which

(check  
one) ☒ is attached hereto.  
☐ was filed on \_\_\_\_\_, as  
Application Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_  
and was amended on \_\_\_\_\_  
(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent Office all information which is known to me to be material to the patentability of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, 1.56.<sup>1</sup>

I do not know and do not believe this invention was ever known or used in the United States of America before my or our invention thereof, or patented or described in any printed publication in any country before my or our invention thereof or more than one year prior to this application, that the same was not in public use or on sale in the United States of America more than one year prior to this application, and I believe that the invention has not been patented or made the subject of an inventor's certificate issued before the date of this application in any country foreign to the United States of America on an application filed by me or my legal representatives or assigns more than twelve months prior to this application, and that no application for patent or inventor's certificate on this invention has been filed in any country foreign to the United States of America prior to this application by me or my legal representatives or assigns, except as identified below:

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Number

Country

Date

199 13 066.3

Germany

March 17, 1999

and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the above listed application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Number

Country

Date

<sup>1</sup> (b) Under this section, information is material to patentability when it is not cumulative to information already of record or being made of record in the application, and

(1) It establishes, by itself or in combination with other information, a *prima facie* case of unpatentability of a claim; or

(2) It refutes, or is inconsistent with, a position the applicant takes in:

(i) Opposing an argument of unpatentability relied on by the Office, or  
(ii) Asserting an argument of patentability.

A *prima facie* case of unpatentability is established when the information compels a conclusion that a claim is unpatentable under the preponderance of evidence, burden-of-proof standard, giving each term in the claim its broadest reasonable construction consistent with the specification, and before any consideration is given to evidence which may be submitted in an attempt to establish a contrary conclusion of patentability.

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If no priority is claimed, I have identified all foreign patent applications filed prior to this application:

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Number

Country

Date

And I hereby appoint Messrs. John D. Simpson (Registration No. 19,842), Dennis A. Gross (24,410), Robert M. Barrett (30,142), Steven H. Noll (28,982), Kevin W. Gynn (29,927), Robert M. Ward (26,517), Brett A. Valiquist (27,841), Edward A. Lehman (22,312), David R. Metzger (32,919), Todd S. Parkhurst (26,494), James D. Hobart (24,149), Melvin A. Robinson (31,870), John R. Garrett (27,888), Joseph P. Reagan (35,332), Michael R. Hull (35,902), Michael S. Leonard (37,557), William E. Vaughan (39,036), Lewis T. Steadman (17,074) and Marvin Moody (16,549), all members of the firm of Hill & Simpson, A Professional Corporation

Telephone: 312/876-0200 Ext. 3899

my attorneys with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith and direct that all correspondence be forwarded to:

Hill & Simpson

A Professional Corporation

85th Floor Sears Tower, Chicago, Illinois 60606

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Inventor's signature

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